

Hibs look set for top six finish after victory over Motherwell



Hibs hopes of a top six finish took a huge boost thanks to a 2-0 victory over nearest challengers Motherwell at Easter Road this afternoon.

Paul Heckingbottom made one change to the starting XI that drew with Rangers with Vykintas Slivka returning from suspension to replace the suspended Darren McGregor which meant that Mark Milligan partnered Paul Hanlon in the centre of defence.

The visitors started brightly in dreadful conditions and within 30 seconds Gboly Ariyibi beat David Gray down the left and sent a cross to the back post, where Lewis Stevenson's attempted clearance came back off the post before being cleared for a goal kick.

At the other end Daryl Horgan's cross from the right was saw

Marc McNulty's header blocked by the knees of goalkeeper Mark Gillespie.

Horgan beat Richard Tait and his cutback found McNulty whose shot was blocked by the arm of Tom Aldred.

Referee Kevin Clancy had no hesitation in pointing to the spot and McNulty fired the resultant penalty into the bottom right hand corner of the net.

Gray picked up an injury on the half hour mark but after receiving treatment he elected to continue and moments later headed home Stevie Mallan's corner to give his side a deserved 2-0 lead.

Gray emerged from the tunnel after the break but was forced to leave the field three minutes later, with Sean Mackie his replacement.

Mackie moved to his more natural left back position with the more experienced Stevenson moving to the right.

Horgan passed up a great chance to secure the victory but fired wide from 10 yards.

In the dying minutes Ofir Marciano produced a tremendous save to deny the visitors after a stramash following a corner then Danny Johnson did have the ball in the net in stoppage time but it was ruled out for a foul on the Hibs' keeper.

Hibs are now five points ahead of Motherwell with three games remaining.

After the final whistle Hibs striker Marc McNulty told BBC Scotland: "It's been a brilliant week – being called up to the Scotland squad – but all my focus has been on today and we knew how big a game it was and how important it was to win.

"To get a goal and a win has been great. I think my form is just a case of playing every week. Whenever I've played week

in, week out at a club I've scored goals."

Hibs: Marciano, Gray (Mackie 47'), Hanlon, Milligan, Horgan (F. Murray 84'), Slivka (Bartley 70'), McNulty, Mallan, Stevenson, Kamberi, Omeonga. Substitutes not used: Dabrowski, Shaw, I. Murray, Allan.

Motherwell: Gillespie, Tait, Aldred, Campbell (Frear 65'), Main (Scott 65'), Ariyibi (Johnson 75'), Grimshaw, Dunn, Rodriguez, Turnbull, Hastie. Substitutes not used: Ferguson, McHugh, Hartley, Frear, Donnelly, Scott.

Referee: Kevin Clancy. Attendance: 17,182.